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VOC FOR IOP/FN
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LARRY LESUEUR

AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES

ANNCR:

DESPITE CREEPING INFLATION AT HOME AND A DEPRECIATING DOLLAR ABROAD, THE AVERAGE AMERICAN STILL SEEMS FAIRLY CONTENT WITH THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE UNITED STATES....AS WE HEAR IN THIS BACKGROUND REPORT BY VOA'S LARRY LESUEUR.

VOICE:

THE POPULATION OF UNITED STATES CITIZENS JUMPED BY SEVEN HUNDRED ONE DAY LAST WEEK, WITHOUT ANYONE BEING BORN. THE OCCASION WAS THE MASS SWEARING-IN OF 700 PERSONS OF ALL AGES AND FROM NUMEROUS COUNTRIES WHO HAD ELECTED TO BECOME U.S. CITIZENS. JUDGING FROM THEIR CHEERS AFTER THEY SWORE ALLEGIANCE TO THE UNITED STATES, THE NEW CITIZENS WERE OVERJOYED BY THEIR NEW STATUS. IF THEY WERE CONCERNED ABOUT THE RISING COST OF LIVING AND THE DEPRECIATION OF THE DOLLAR ABROAD, THEY DIDN'T SHOW IT. THEY SIMPLY SEEMED PROUD OF THEMSELVES.

THE FACT IS, THE AVERAGE AMERICAN SHOWS LITTLE CONCERN AND NOT A GREAT DEAL OF UNDERSTANDING ABOUT THE FALLING VALUE OF THE AMERICAN DOLLAR IN SUCH COUNTRIES AS WEST GERMANY, JAPAN AND SWITZERLAND. IN MANY COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD, THE VALUE OF THE DOLLAR HAS REMAINED CONSTANT OR HAS EVEN APPRECIATED.

IN A COUNTRY WHERE THE PRESS OFTEN TENDS TO PLAY UP THE MORE RIGOROUS SIDE OF LIFE, THERE IS SOMETHING HEARTENING IN THE IMPRESSIONS OF AN AMERICAN FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT WHO RECENTLY RETURNED FROM EUROPE. MR. MICHAEL HOFMAN OF THE NEW YORK TIMES, WHO HAS BEEN STATIONED ABROAD FOR MANY YEARS, SAID THAT WHILE

NEW YORKERS MIGHT NOT BELIEVE IT, THE CITY SEEMS DOWNRIGHT INEXPENSIVE TO ANYONE ARRIVING FROM THE CAPITALS OF EUROPE, WHERE PRICES HAVE BEEN SOARING AND THE DOLLAR HAS BEEN SAGGING. THE NEW YORK TIMES CORRESPONDENT WAS PLEASED WITH WHAT HE CALLED THE BARGAINS IN MEN'S APPAREL, AND HE STOCKED-UP ON SHIRTS, SOCKS AND TIES. HE SAID EVEN THE PRICES IN NEW YORK'S FINE RESTAURANTS SEEMED REASONABLE TO HIM AT A TIME WHEN DINING OUT, SAY IN BRUSSELS, COULD COST UP TO SEVENTY-FIVE DOLLARS FOR TWO. AND HE FOUND THE PLENTIFUL AMERICAN FAST-FOOD PLACES A GOOD BUY FOR WORKING PEOPLE.

HOWEVER, WHAT STRUCK MR. HOFMANN MOST WAS THAT MOST NEW YORKERS WERE PLEASANT TO EACH OTHER AND TO STRANGERS. HE WAS VERY PLEASED THAT EVEN THE TRADITIONALLY BUSY AND AGGRESSIVE NEW YORKER WAS RELAXED ENOUGH TO SAY "HAVE A NICE DAY."

THAT OFT-REPEATED PHRASE MAY HAVE BECOME A STANDARD SALUTATION THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES. BUT LIKE FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT HOFMANN, MOST PEOPLE LIKE TO HEAR IT AND TO SAY IT. IT SEEMS TO REFLECT A NEW FOUND ATTITUDE OF GOODWILL AND TOLERANCE IN THIS MULTI-RACIAL SOCIETY.

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